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Christ Tempted ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ ♣ As We Are

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BY ELLEN G. WHITE

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Christ Tempted As We Are

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BY MRS. E. G. WHITE

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"In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:17, 18.

"For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4: 15, 16.

Christ came to this world, and clothed His divinity with humanity, taking upon Him the nature of man. He came to pass through the experiences of humanity, to pass over the ground on which Adam had fallen, to redeem his failure, to meet and conquer the adversary of God and man, that through His grace man might be an overcomer, and finally have a place with Him upon His throne. He took the field of conflict, and on this atom of a world the controversy between Christ, the Prince of Life, and Satan, the prince of darkness, was to be waged. By transgression man had

partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Jesus says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." This, the beginning of our confidence, we must hold steadfastly unto the end. Jesus can enable us to resist Satan's temptations; for He came to bring divine power to combine with human effort.

Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." He speaks of himself as well as the Father when He speaks of omnipotent power, and claims for Himself perfect righteousness. In Christ dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This is why, although tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world untainted by the corruptions that surrounded Him. We also are to become partakers of that fullness, and only in this way shall we be enabled to overcome as Christ overcame.

The great work of redemption could be carried out by the Redeemer only as He took the place of fallen man. Burdened with the sins of the world, He must pass over the path where Adam fell, and redeem his failure. When Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him, he was surrounded by the glories of Eden. But it was not thus with Jesus; for, bearing the infirmities of degenerate humanity, He entered the wilderness to cope with the mighty foe, that He might lift man up from the lowest depths of his degradation. Alone He was to tread the path of temptation and exercise self-control stronger than hunger, ambition, or death.

Clothed as an angel of light, the artful foe presented his specious temptations to the Saviour. He sought to persuade Christ to turn from the path of self-denial and cross bearing. He assured Jesus that God was satisfied with His willingness to endure the trial, but that as He stayed the hand of Abraham when about to sacrifice Issac, so now, satisfied with Christ's willingness to set His feet in the blood-

stained path, He had sent an angel to deliver Him from the long fast by which He was to overcome the power of appetite in man's behalf. This specious reasoning was a temptation to Christ. His humanity made it a temptation to Him, and it was only by trusting His Father's word that He could resist the power of the enemy. He walked by faith, as we must walk by faith, and turned from the artful deceiver, who feigned to doubt his divinity, and urged that if He were the Son of God He should make it manifest by a display of divine power. Satan declared that a powerful angel of heaven had been banished to the earth, and that Christ's appearance indicated that instead of being the King of heaven, He was this fallen angel, forsaken of God and deserted by man. He declared that if He were the Son of God, He was equal with God, and could make this evident by working a miracle. He said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." He promised that if Jesus would do this, he would acknowledge His supremacy and no longer contest His claims. The arch deceiver hoped that, under the force of despondency and extreme hunger, Christ would lose faith in His Father, work a miracle in His own behalf, and take Himself out of His Father's hands. Had He done this, the plan of salvation would have been broken; for it was contrary to its terms that Christ should work a miracle in His own behalf. Throughout His life on earth, His power must be exercised for the good of suffering humanity alone. As man's representative, He was to bear the trials of man, leaving a perfect example of submission and trust in God. Jesus met the adversary with the word of God. He said, "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." It was not for the Son of God to descend from His lofty mission to prove His divinity to a fallen foe, or to condescend to explain His humiliation as man's Redeemer. If the children of men would follow the example of Christ, and hold no converse with the enemy, they would be spared many a defeat at his hands.

Foiled in the attempt to provoke Christ to manifest His divine power in His own behalf, and seeking to awe Him by a display of superior power, Satan bore the Son of God from the wilderness, and set Him upon a pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem. He there admitted that Jesus had been right in manifesting unqualified trust in God, and declaring that God had promised to give His angel's charge over Him that He should not dash His foot against a stone, he urged Christ to manifest still more faith in the word of God. He said to Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash thy foot against a stone." Satan thought to take advantage of Christ's humanity, and urge Him beyond the limits of trust into the sin of presumption. But, while manifesting perfect trust in His Father, He refused to put Himself in a position which would necessitate the interposition of His Father to save Him from death. He would not force Providence to His rescue, and thus fail to give man an example of perfect trust and submission.

Baffled in his attempt to overthrow the integrity of Christ, Satan now hazards all, and throwing off his assumed character, he avows himself the arch rebel, the ruler of the kingdom of men, the sovereign of the earth. Placing Jesus upon a high mountain, he causes the kingdoms of the earth to pass in panoramic view before the Redeemer. He presents the glory of the world, and promises to put Christ, without suffering or peril, in possession of all its power, if He will but concede that He is inferior to Satan, and bow in homage before him. The life of Christ was darkened by sorrow, privation, hardship, and toil. Homeless and friendless as He was, the mighty kingdoms of earth were offered to Him for a single consideration. To regain the supremacy of the earth, He would have to pass over the blood-stained path through Gethsemane and Calvary; but He dallies not with the tempter. Turning to his

adversary, He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Writhing with humiliation and rage, the baffled foe is forced to leave the presence of the world's Redeemer. He cannot withstand the authority of Christ's command, and he is compelled to acknowledge that Christ's victory is as complete as had been Adam's failure. After the foe had left Him, Jesus fell exhausted to the earth, with the pallor of death upon His countenance. The angels of heaven had watched the conflict, beholding their beloved Commander as He passed through inexpressible suffering to make a way of escape for man. He had endured the test, greater than any man could ever be called upon to endure,— as much greater as His Character was more elevated and pure. The angels now ministered to the fainting Son of God. Strengthened with food, comforted with the assurance of His victory and His Father's love, His great heart goes out in sympathy for man, and He determines to go forth to complete the work He has begun, and rest not until the foe is vanquished, and the human race redeemed.

The followers of Christ are called upon to share with Him in His sufferings. The confederacy of evil is arrayed against those who would follow in the footsteps of the world's Redeemer. We are to battle with the mighty prince of evil; but the Saviour tells us that we are not to fight alone. All the heavenly intelligences will come to our help. Amid the darkness of the world, we are to catch the radiance from the throne of God, and to shed the light of heaven to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Christian is enlisted to fight in the cause of God, to be a soldier of Jesus Christ. Jesus fought all our battles during His life upon earth, and in that He was tempted, He knows how to succor those who shall be tempted. We have no power to war with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places,

except as we draw strength from Christ. Jesus calls upon you to behold the confederacy of evil, to behold the conflict through which you must pass. He bids us count the cost of standing under the blood-stained banner; He does not flatter us that we shall have no difficulties in this life; but, although we shall be tried and tempted in meeting the confederacy of evil, yet we are assured that all the heavenly intelligences will be enlisted on our side in every battle. But the ministry of angels will not insure us against sorrow and trial. Angels ministered to Jesus; yet their presence did not make His life one of ease, nor free Him from conflict and temptation. While we are engaged in the work which the Master has appointed us to do, though trials and perplexities and temptations press upon us, we should not be discouraged; for we know that One has endured all these temptations before us.

We each have a battle to fight with the fallen foe. We should begin the conflict in the light of the Bible, gaining victories over self, giving no place to the evil one. We should not sin against God by indulging sinful thoughts or speaking murmuring words. We should not let the enemy control our powers in the least, but throw all the weight of our influence on the side of Christ. God has pledged His word that His grace will be sufficient for us in our greatest necessity, in our sorest distress. Appropriating this grace, Christ will be found to be a very present help in time of trouble.

The Lord expects His servants to excel the lovers of this world in life and character. That they may do this, He has placed at their command unlimited resources. The Christian is a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. He is looked upon as one who is striving for the mastery, running the race set before him, that he may obtain the prize, even an immortal crown. His motives are to be above the motives of those who love the world. He is to feel that in the great contest in which he is engaged, there is everything to win, and everything to lose. He is to realize that he must make use of

every intrusted power to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Grace has been abundantly provided that he may not fail nor be discouraged, but be complete in Christ, accepted in the Beloved.

Those who would be victors should contemplate the cost of salvation, that they may be subdued by the love of Christ, that their strong human passions may be conquered, and their will brought into captivity to their Redeemer. The Christian is to realize that he is not his own, but that he has been bought with a price. His strongest temptations will come from within; for he must battle against the inclinations of the natural heart. The Lord knows our weaknesses; yet He has valued man, even though finite and incapable of any good in and of himself, at an infinite price. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Every struggle against sin, every effort to conform to the law of God, is Christ working through His appointed agencies upon the human heart. Oh, if we could comprehend what Jesus is to us and what we are to Him, murmuring would be forever silenced, unbelief would be swept away, the value of the soul would appear, and we would believe that God has loved us with an everlasting love!

You who are tempted and tried and discouraged, look up. Let no weary, halting, sin-oppressed soul become faint hearted and lose hope. The promises of God come sounding down along the lines to us, assuring us that we may reach heaven if we will abide in Christ. Look up; it is fatal to look down. Looking down, the earth reels and sways beneath you, and nothing is sure. A divine hand is reached towards you. The hand of the Infinite is stretched over the battlements of heaven to grasp your hand in its embrace. The mighty helper is nigh to help the most erring, the most sinful and despairing. Look up by faith, and the light of the glory of God will shine upon you. Do not be discouraged because you see that your

character is defective. The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in distinct contrast with His perfect character. Be not discouraged; this is an evidence that Satan's delusions are losing their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you, and that your indifference and ignorance are passing away.

Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging may be your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness. Do not continue to talk of your weakness; Jesus came to bring moral power to combine with human effort, that we might advance step by step in the heavenward way. Let your faith lay hold of the precious promises of God, and if clouds have encompassed you, the mists will roll back; for the angels of God are ever ready to help in every trial and emergency. We are not left to battle unaided against the prince of darkness. As we realize the attacks of the enemy, we shall feel the need of fleeing to the stronghold; we shall learn to lean upon the mighty One. He will be to us as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, as a covert from the tempest. Deep and fervent will be the gratitude of him who experiences the help of God in times of temptation and trial.

The whole army of heaven is enlisted to fight our battles for us, to work out for us a glorious victory, and Jesus is the Captain of our salvation. But let no one think that we shall not be called upon to endure tribulation. John says:—

"I beheld, and, lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and

palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:9-17.

Everyone who shall be found with the wedding garment on, will have come out of great tribulation. The mighty surges of temptation will beat upon all the followers of Christ, and unless they are riveted to the eternal Rock, they will be borne away. Do you think you can safely drift with the current? You must stem the tide, or you will surely become a helpless prey to Satan's power. You are not safe in placing your feet on the ground of the enemy, but should direct your path in the way cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. Even in the path of holiness you will be tried; your faith, your love, your patience, your constancy, will be tested. By diligent searching of the Scriptures, by earnest prayer for divine help, prepare the soul to resist temptation. The Lord will hear the sincere prayer of the contrite soul, and will lift up a standard for you against the enemy.

Jesus left His home in heaven, and came to this dark world, to reach to the very depths of human woe, that He might save those who are ready to perish. He laid aside His glory in the heavenly courts above, clothed His divinity with humanity, and for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. He came to the earth, that was all seared and marred with sin, "and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He submitted to insult and mockery, that He might leave us a perfect example. When we are inclined to magnify our trials, to think we are having a hard time, we should look away from self to Jesus, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." All this He endured that He might bring many sons and daughters to God, to present them before the universe as trophies of his victory.

In order to be overcomers, we must heed the injunction of the apostle, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He is the Pattern that we, as His disciples, must follow. We cannot cherish selfishness in our hearts, and follow the example of Christ, who died to make an atonement for us. We cannot extol our own merits, and follow His example; for He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. We cannot harbor pride and follow Christ, since He humbled Himself until there was no lower place to which He could descend. Be astonished, O heavens, and be amazed, O earth, that sinful man should make such returns to his Lord in formality and pride, in efforts to lift up and glorify himself, when Christ came and humbled Himself in our behalf, even to the death of the cross.

Christ came to teach us how to live. He has invited us to learn of Him, to be meek and lowly of heart, that we may find rest unto our souls. We have no excuse for not imitating His life and working

His works. Those who profess His name and do not practice His precepts, are weighed in the balances of heaven, and found wanting. But those who reflect His image will have a place in the mansions which He has gone to prepare.

He who is a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a part of the cross of Christ, a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and to save the lost. The Christian is ever to realize that he is bought with a price, to stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. He is to reveal Christ to the world. The self-denial, the self-sacrifice, the sympathy, the love that were manifested in the life of Christ, are to reappear in the life of His followers. In order to do this, we must put on the whole armor of God; "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." If we do not overcome, we lose the crown; and if we lose the crown, we lose everything. Eternal loss or eternal gain will be ours. If we gain the crown, we gain all things; we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Christ is coming in a little while. He has been our brother in suffering; and if we overcome, through His grace, we shall see Him as He is. We shall suffer here but a few days longer, and then enter into an eternity of happiness; for there is sweet rest in the kingdom of God. For those that fight the good fight of faith, there is reserved a crown of glory, a palm of victory, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Let the determination of every soul be, "I must run the race; I must overcome." ◇

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